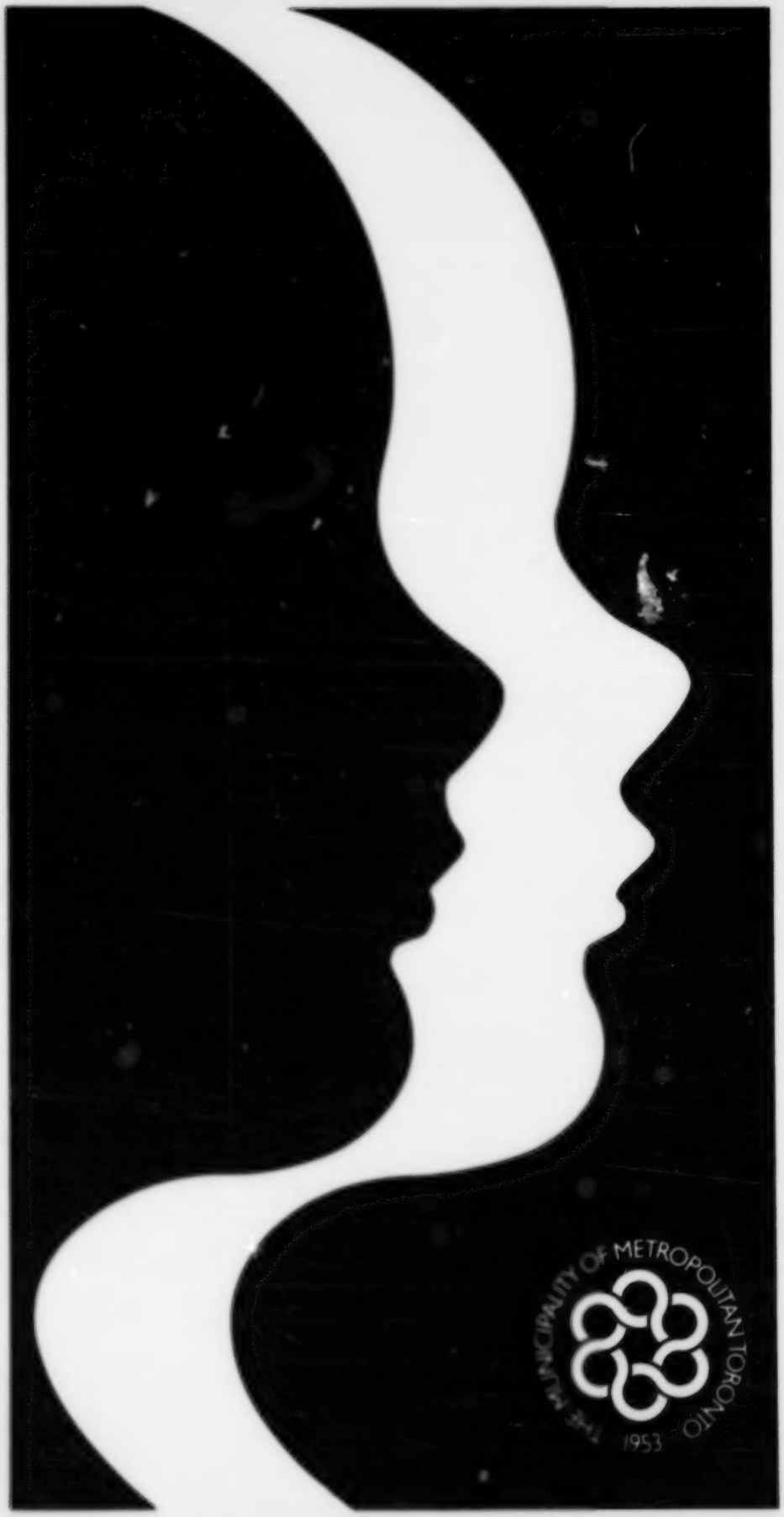

1990 COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF CHILDCARE REPORT

FACE OF THE FUTURE

Community Services Department

The Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto

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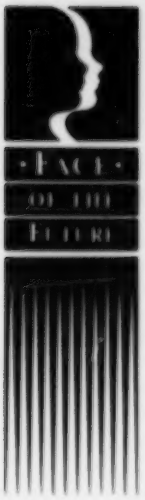

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COUNCILLOR DALE MARTIN
– Toronto Downtown –

June 14, 1990

Councillor Brian Ashton
Chairperson,
Community Services and Housing Committee
of Metropolitan Toronto
390 Bay Street
Suite 308

Dear Councillor Ashton:

It is with pleasure that I submit to your Committee the final report of the Comprehensive Review of Child Care entitled "Metro's Children: Face of the Future". As directed by Metropolitan Toronto Council, this review preserves the values and principles underlying the present child care system while examining the current issues and future challenges facing it. It also positions Metro for the future joint review of the broader range of children's services that Council directed be undertaken with the education sector. The Day Care Sub–committee believes that the recommendations contained within the Comprehensive Review Report will allow Metro's tradition of leadership in child care to be retained and will position Metro to respond in a focused way to future service needs.

I extend to you and the other members of the Day Care Sub–committee: Councillor Maria Augimeri, Councillor Paul Christie, Mayor Art Eggleton, Councillor Roger Hollander and Councillor Joan King my appreciation for the leauership you provided to the process.

My thanks also to those members of the community who shared their time, experience and insight with us. I look forward to continued consultation with the community as this report is considered by Metropolitan Toronto Council.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Dale Martin
Chairperson,
Day Care Sub–committee

Debbie Field, Executive Assistant Eunice Savino, Administrative Assistant
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Executive Summary

Metropolitan Toronto is planning for the future. Social, economic, and political forces integrate to shape Metro's vision for its residents. Securing the future through continued leadership in child care is proving to be a wise investment for all concerned.

In the tradition of two previous Planning Task Forces on Day Care, this Council directed that a Comprehensive Review of Metro's future role in child care be undertaken. Faced with diminished federal commitment and shifting provincial funding and service priorities for child care, the Comprehensive Review has re–examined and re–affirmed the basic beliefs underlying the child care service delivery system within Metropolitan Toronto. Out of the review process undertaken in partnership with the community, a series of recommendations has been developed to set Metro's course for the 90's.

While accepting the basic recommendations adopted by Metro in its 1987 "Blueprint for Child Care" the Comprehensive Review clarifies how the Blueprint's service plan can be implemented given the financial constraints on Metro. It also suggests ways to refocus Metro's energies and priorities and advocate strategies to build broader commitment to the achievement of Metro's child care goals.

The recommendations that follow are built on the following set of beliefs:

- child care is an essential public service which should meet high quality service standards and be accessible and affordable to thosewho need it.

- child care as a developmental service benefits children, families and society in general.

- child care depends on a partnership between families who use it, the community which provides it and the public sector which helps plan, administer and fund it.

- municipal government is well suited to administer child care services and ensure that they are sensitive and accountable to local needs and priorities.

- Metropolitan Toronto should continue to demonstrate leadership in child care planning and development. Leadership in today's environment does not mean standing alone but rather building and maintaining partnerships and working together to improve child care services.

The 35 recommendations proposed in the report have been organized into seven categories:

- financial issues and strategies
- service planning
- client services
- service support
- the Metropolitan Corporation
- building commitment to child care
- unresolved issues

The following are the specific recommendations in each category:

Financial Issues and Strategies

Recommendation 1

Metro should use the opportunity provided by the release of the Report of the Provincial Municipal Social Services Review, P.M.S.S.R., to find long term relief to current cost sharing imbalances through renegotiation of Metro–provincial roles and responsibilities in a broader range of community program areas.

Recommendation 2

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to work to eliminate the present cost sharing imbalance and to negotiate with the province a mutually agreeable cost sharing formula for the immediate future.

Recommendation 3

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to pursue the provincial pass–through of Metro claims eligible for federal cost sharing under the Canada Assistance Plan.

Recommendation 4

Metro should continue to negotiate with the province the application of client revenue recovered from social assistance recipients eligible for the Support to Employment Program, S.T.E.P., to the subsidized child care system when these clients choose to use subsidized care.

Service Planning

Recommendation 5

Planning for child care services should be done in cycles timed to match the mandate of the municipal term and to provide maximum impact on the provincial 3–year funding cycle established as part of the "New Directions" initiative.

Recommendation 6

Annual municipal funding commitments in support of Metro's multi–year service plan for child care should be confirmed after the funding cycle intentions of the province are announced.

Recommendation 7

To make child care accessible to those who need it, Metropolitan Toronto should actively promote growth in licensed child care spaces as well as growth in subsidies for families who cannot afford to pay the full cost of service. A minimum realistic response to the identified need requires that the present subsidy system double.

Recommendation 8

The prevailing service focus of Metro's child care system should become children 0–5 years of age. It is further recommended that Metro, in partnership with municipal and provincial educational authorities and other public institutions explore alternate service strategies which would allow the educational sector to assume primary responsibility for the care of school age children by the end of the decade. These discussions should also explore how this transfer of primary responsibility may occur without imposing further burden on the property tax base.

Recommendation 9

By the end of the current term of Council it is recommended that the jointly sponsored review which Council, on May 1, 1990, directed the Department to undertake with the education community within Metro, have been completed.

Recommendation 10

Metro's directly operated programs should re–focus on service to the youngest aged children and those most at risk. A transition plan which will allow for the eventual graduation of the current school–aged service component to alternate community programs should be developed.

Recommendation 11

Metro should introduce a ward–based service planning process which takes into account parental preference and considers a broad range of service models including "the hub", workplace child care, private home day care etc. and which ensures that the planning of child care services does not occur in isolation from other community services.

Recommendation 12

Subsidy space ceilings and the development of new spaces should be managed on a ward basis by age group with specific targets and timeframes to improve accessibility for the most underserved children and communities.

Recommendation 13

To improve accessibility of child care services, particularly for those age groups and those communities which are currently underserved, Metro should take a more active role in developing and, when required, operating new spaces. The capital program should be "reframed" to allow Metro to "build to lease" to community operators meeting the municipality's Operating Criteria. This capital capability would also allow the eventual conversion of existing licensed stock for school aged children to meet the requirements of younger aged children.

Recommendation 14

Metropolitan Toronto, in consultation with the Private Home Day Care Association of Metropolitan Toronto should explore strategies to enable agencies to provide more service to younger aged children and those families requiring more flexible hours of care without undermining private home day care as the choice of a broader cross section of families attracted by its service features.

Client Services

Recommendation 15

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to broaden the eligibility band for child care subsidies to the limits of municipal discretion in recognition of factors unique to this municipality that create higher child care needs than elsewhere in Ontario.

Recommendation 16

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to advocate for the realistic updating of the current asset ceilings on the provincially approved needs test used to determine child care subsidy eligibility.

Recommendation 17

Metropolitan Toronto should retain the "first come first served" placement policy and should apply it in conjunction with the geographic and age equity targets established.

Recommendation 18

To serve a broader cross–section of the needs of Metro's residents with respect to child care, Metro should develop a plan for the provision of a wider variety of information, referral and advisory services.

Recommendation 19

In recognition of the diversity of ethno–cultural backgrounds and the variety of languages used by the client group served, Metro should work with the child care community to make the services provided more sensitive to the needs of the children and families served.

Recommendation 20

In recognition that Metropolitan Toronto has been designated as a French Language Service area, Metro should improve its own capability to provide support to Francophone services being developed in this community.

Service Support

Recommendation 21

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to provide adequate financial support to community operators under purchase of service contract while continuing to press the Province of Ontario to recognize and pay their fair share of the associated costs. These costs should reflect realistically the costs of providing care in the Metropolitan Toronto community.

Recommendation 22

Quality being the cornerstone of Metropolitan Toronto's child care system, this municipality should continue to champion high standards and improved programming. This may be accomplished through continued use of the Metro Operating Criteria, recently updated and improved with the assistance of the community and through Metro continuing its role in program inspection and quality assurance.

Recommendation 23

Metro should make available to community child care programs its in–service training packages for curriculum and the customized packages it has developed in response to legislatively mandated training (e.g., WHMIS).

Recommendation 24

Metro should continue to make consultative assistance and program support services available to community child care programs experiencing difficulties in financial management, organizational development, or program effectiveness.

Recommendation 25

Metro should continue to encourage parental involvement in all child care programs by helping parent advisory committees and parent boards access the information and support services they require.

Recommendation 26

Recognizing that access to the benefits of Pay Equity legislation is essential to maintaining and improving the quality of early childhood education in community–based as well as municipally operated child care programs, Metro should advocate that the province responsibly address the issue of fair access to the legislation by child care professionals.

Recommendation 27

Metro should recognize the need to adjust staffing levels in child care programs serving clients who require special or intensive services and should advocate with the province for full cost sharing of this necessary support.

Recommendation 28

Recognizing the value of advice from both service consumers and service providers with respect to present service operation and future service planning, Metro should re–affirm the Metro Day Care Advisory Committee, D.C.A.C., as a body appointed to advise Community Services and Housing Committee on child care issues. Metro should also direct the DCAC to ensure through its membership structure, its operating practices and its meeting forum that it fairly represents the variety of consumer and provider interests within the Metro child care community.

The Metropolitan Corporation

Recommendation 29

Metropolitan Toronto, as a corporation and an employer should continue to lead by example and create enhanced workplace child care policies for its own employees.

Recommendation 30

Metropolitan Toronto, through the Economic Development Division should review how the availability of child care within this municipality could be used to advantage as part of the economic development strategy.

Recommendation 31

Metropolitan Toronto should promote increased involvement in applied and evaluative research related to child care to improve program quality and better understand the needs of the community it serves.

Recommendation 32

Metropolitan Toronto should separate the planning, funding, and administration of the subsidized child care system from the direct operation of municipal child care programs by making appropriate revisions in the organizational structure of the Children's Services Division.

Building Commitment to Child Care

Recommendation 33

Metro should further strengthen the "Metro Case for Child Care" developed as part of the Comprehensive Review discussions, reinforcing the conclusions contained with findings from locally–based research.

Recommendation 34

Metro should develop and implement a comprehensive public communications strategy to ensure that the public becomes better informed about the social, economic and financial benefits of child care and to secure public support for a more rational approach to financing child care as a basic public service.

Recommendation 35

Metro should ensure that the child care system is considered a vital part of the Social Development Strategy for Metropolitan Toronto so that development of child care is tied to the many social and economic factors influencing it.

Unresolved Issues

Recommendation 36

Metro–specific investigation of service quality in public, non–profit and commercial child care settings is needed to examine the effect of service auspices on program delivery. It is also recommended that the Social Development Strategy initiative review and clarify Metro's future purchasing policies with respect to human services.

It is a difficult time to be a leader, but leadership is urgently needed if Metropolitan Toronto is to protect the excellence of its child care service delivery system. The infrastructure is in place. What is needed is the will to sustain Metro's vision of child care — as an essential public service that should be affordable and accessible to all who need it.

The effects of this vision are already evident in Metropolitan Toronto. Support for this service demonstrates that Metro values its children and recognizes their basic rights. High quality child care is improving the lives of the children and families who use the service and demonstrating our collective commitment to equality, fairness, and human development.

Every resident of this municipality has a stake in ensuring the maintenance and expansion of our child care system. As taxpayers we all benefit from the availability of high quality child care that encourages the business community to remain in this area, enables families to obtain financial independence, and is proven to be a cost–effective method of primary prevention for children at risk.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origin of the Comprehensive Review

Metropolitan Toronto has the largest and most established child care delivery system in Canada. The system has long functioned as a set of partnerships between the families who use it, community based operators and three levels of government. The licensed, child care system is funded partly by user fees and partly through subsidies shared by the Municipal, Provincial and Federal Governments within the scope of the Canada Assistance Plan (C.A.P.) and the Ontario Day Nurseries Act.

This cost sharing arrangement has served as a reliable, relatively open ended mechanism which afforded the Metropolitan Corporation a great deal of discretion in the planning, development and delivery of child care services. However, in 1988, the Province refused to recognize, for cost sharing purposes, the full extent of subsidized space expansion and actual increases to the operating cost per space. Metropolitan Toronto was forced to make up the shortfall with 100 per cent. municipal dollars. Furthermore, Metropolitan Toronto was faced with the prospect of committing even more non-reimbursable funds in 1989 simply to prevent the erosion of existing service levels.

In December 1986, Metropolitan Council unanimously approved the final report of the Day Care Planning Task Force, Blueprint for Child Care Services, which established a five year growth plan for licensed and subsidized child care within the municipality. The cost sharing predicament threatened the realization of the Blueprint objectives. Therefore, on September 16, 1988, Metropolitan Council resolved to undertake a comprehensive review of options available to the municipality in planning, delivery and funding of child care services. Council approved the terms of reference for the comprehensive review on February 1, 1989.

1.2 The Review Process

The comprehensive review was undertaken by the Community Services Department under the direction and guidance of the Day Care Subcommittee of Metropolitan Council's Community Services and Housing Committee. A community reference group was established to ensure that a wide range of perspectives was considered. Most of the work on the review was done during 1989. A full listing of all participants may be found in Appendix I.

The conclusions and recommendations of the comprehensive review are all directed to Metropolitan Toronto Council and reflect consideration of how the efforts and activities of this municipal corporation may be employed most effectively within the context of the child care system. In arriving at the study's conclusions, the Day Care Subcommittee and staff drew extensively on the expertise and perspectives of a range of interested operators, consumers and advocates within the child care sector. Members of the community reference group joined staff and politicians in a variety of working and strategy sessions to explore issues and options. The comprehensive review process strived to build consensus. Where total agreement on future directions was not achieved, there is no question that the underlying analysis benefitted from the thoughtful contributions of all to the discussions.

1.3 The Scope of the Review

The commissioning of the Comprehensive Review was timely. Not only had the economic and political climate begun to change, but also other significant events had occurred. Metro had moved to direct election, the Province had released its response to "Transitions", and the Provincial Municipal Social Services Review process was nearing completion. Data from the 1986 census were now available. The funding crisis experienced by child care in Metro Toronto during the summer of 1988 was the final precipitating event. It was therefore imperative that the review explore the causes of the cost sharing shortfall and examine options for resolving it. Financial issues and strategies are considered in the next section of this report.

In adopting the terms of reference for the comprehensive review, Metropolitan Council directed that the underlying values and principles embodied in the Blueprint should be preserved. These principles are:

- child care is an essential public service which should meet high quality service standards and be accessible and affordable to those who need it.
- child care as a developmental service benefits children, families and society in general.
- child care depends on a partnership between families who use it, the community which provides it and the public sector which helps plan, administer and fund it.
- municipal government is well suited to administer child care services and ensure that they are sensitive and accountable to local needs and priorities.
- Metropolitan Toronto should continue to demonstrate leadership in child care planning and development. Leadership in today's environment does not mean standing alone but rather building and maintaining partnerships and working together to improve child care services.

Although Council reaffirmed the underlying values outlined in the Blueprint, the comprehensive review was a timely exercise for reasons other than the immediate need to address funding issues.

In the period surrounding the adoption of the Blueprint there was an optimistic mood in the child care sector. Metropolitan Council committed itself to an ambitious schedule of expansion in the number of licensed and subsidy spaces. The province appeared to endorse the Blueprint and, in 1987 published its White Paper "New Directions for Child Care" which supported the notion of child care as a public service. There were discussions at the federal level about the need for a national child care policy.

Since then there have been several changes in the public policy environment. The Federal Government has placed a high priority on deficit reduction. This has affected transfer payments to the province. Significantly, in his most recent Budget, the Federal Minister of Finance announced his intention to limit expansion of funding under the Canada Assistance Plan. It is already evident that there will be an echo effect of retrenchment at the provincial level. Senior government funds for child care could continue to be scarce for the foreseeable future. It is therefore essential that Metropolitan Toronto refocus its own activities in ways that will move most effectively towards the fulfilment of Blueprint objectives in a period of relatively scarce resources.

The need to refocus Metropolitan Toronto's role within the child care system is further reinforced by the publication of the Final Report of the Provincial Municipal Social Services

Review (P.M.S.S.R.) on April 6, 1990. The P.M.S.S.R. report has recommended a greater municipal role in the planning, funding and administration of child care services. The comprehensive review provided an opportunity to examine the major issues currently facing the child care system from the perspective of the role the Metropolitan Corporation can and should play within the system in the 1990's. A number of clear themes emerged from the review of the issues and the corporation's role. These themes form the basis for the organization of the remainder of the report.

2. FINANCIAL ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

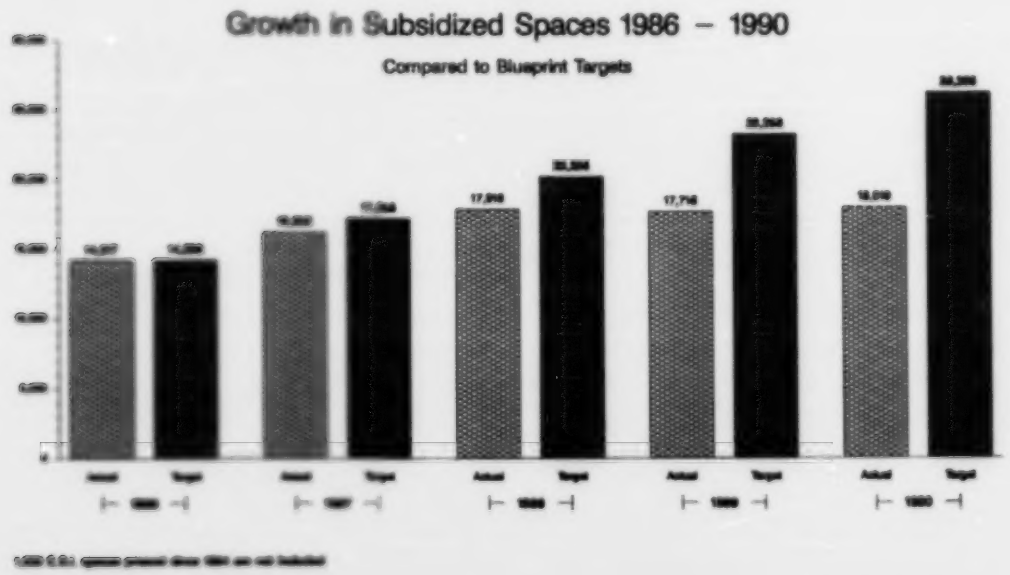
2.1 Factors Affecting Demand for Service and Cost of Service

Traditionally, the cost sharing formula for base funding of subsidized child care has been twenty per cent. municipal, thirty per cent. provincial and fifty per cent. federal. The total value of required base funding is determined by the total number of subsidized child care spaces and the cost of operating each space.

In 1988, responding to community demand, and following Blueprint targets, Metropolitan Toronto requested the province to cost share an expansion of 2,000 subsidy spaces. Unexpectedly, the province agreed to contribute to an expansion of only 800 spaces. In large part the discrepancy was a consequence of the provincial government's active pursuit of the objective of province-wide equity of access to child care services, outlined in the 1987 provincial White Paper on child care.

The equity objective affected Metropolitan Toronto adversely in two ways. Firstly, as more jurisdictions across the province took an interest in subsidized child care provision, the provincial allocation was drawn on more heavily leaving little or no surplus for leaders such as Metropolitan Toronto to take advantage of in the expansion of their own services.

This divergence in Metro and provincial expansion priorities further exacerbated the difficulty Metro was experiencing in meeting all of the service targets proposed in the "Blueprint". Chart 1 compares the "Blueprint Service Targets" with the actual service achievements.



Secondly, the province based its 1988 subsidy allocations solely on child population demographics. Social indicators which more accurately reflect need were not taken into account. Thus, with a child population of 20 per cent. of the provincial total and 40 per cent. of the province's subsidy spaces, Metropolitan Toronto was regarded as relatively well serviced.

However, child population statistics alone do not express Metropolitan Toronto's unique child care needs, which reflect the special nature of this rapidly growing and changing municipality.

As the 1989 Provincial Audit stated, "The current method of allocating funds among municipalities does not address the changing needs of municipalities over time... Local demographic factors, such as the number of single parent families or depressed income levels, are not used to determine the allocation of funding and hence the number of subsidized spaces in each local community."

In a number of significant respects that directly affect demand for child care services but which are currently not recognized by the province as doing so, Metro is different from other municipalities in the province. Firstly, the costs of living are higher in Metro than elsewhere in Ontario. Consequently, more parents of young children must work in order to afford to live here, and that translates into an unusually high demand for child care. Compared to other Ontario municipalities, Metro has a greater number of dual income families and a significantly higher rate of labour force participation by mothers of young children.

Table 1 compares a variety of key indicators of social need for Metro Toronto and Ontario.

Table 1

Comparing Metro Toronto to Ontario

	Ontario	Metro	Percent
Families with Children of Child Care Age	1,338,460	287,555	21.5
Children age 0 – 9	1,239,550	248,255	20.0
Single Parent Families	290,755	84,820	29.5
Low Income Families	270,740	75,180	27.8
Female Labour Force	2,169,790	591,085	27.2
participation rate	59.3	62.7	
Immigration – 1989	103,841	62,637	60.3

Source: 1986 Census of Canada,
Dept. Manpower and Immigration

And because Metro is an expensive place to live, many parents need financial assistance in order to obtain child care services. Since families pay considerably more for the necessities of life especially housing than they do in other communities, more of them require child care subsidies.

Two other factors unique to this municipality contribute to the relatively high demand for child care subsidies: 20 per cent. more low income families and a greater concentration of single parent families live in Metro than elsewhere in Ontario. Without access to affordable child care, many of these parents would be forced to choose between leaving their children alone during the day or forsaking employment and education.

Metro Toronto also attracts a far higher proportion of recent immigrants than most other communities in Ontario. Many new Canadians must upgrade their skills and education in order to gain employment; until they have access to child care services, many of these parents cannot become productive, contributing members of society. Meeting the developmental needs of their children, many of whom are learning English as a second language while adapting to a different culture and a new home, requires extra resources and supplemental programming.

Understandably, staffing and operating child programs is more expensive in a municipality where the cost of living is high and there are many distinct groups requiring special services. However, in 1988 and 1989 the Ontario government did not recognize that the costs of operating child care centres and agencies were rising more quickly in Metro than in other municipalities, and thus did not cost share the full service costs of subsidized clients. Whereas actual operating costs increased by 12.4 per cent. between 1987 and 1988, the province agreed to cost share just a 4.5 per cent. increase.

As a result of the provincial government's failure to acknowledge the unique social and economic factors which contribute to the demand for child care and its true cost in Metropolitan Toronto, the municipality has been financing the deficit created by the provincial cost sharing shortfall. By 1989 the actual cost sharing proportions had become 30 per cent. municipal, 27 per cent. provincial and 43 per cent. federal instead of the traditional 20:30:50 split.

2.2 The Need for a Stable Cost Sharing Arrangement

The provincial government's intention of making accessibility to child care more equitable across the province is laudable, but the current methods used to pursue this goal do not ensure realistic and fair assessment of Metro's own child care needs. Child care is one strand of an interwoven, interrelated social and economic web and should not be treated as an isolated service. Therefore, demographic and economic factors specific to this municipality must be recognized by all levels of government as contributing to considerably higher needs for child care spaces and subsidies than elsewhere in Ontario.

Until there is a cost sharing arrangement based upon a realistic assessment of need, the type of funding crisis experienced over the past several years is likely to recur. Such uncertainty is bound to impede effective service planning.

It appears that the seeds for a long term solution to the current funding dilemma are contained in the recommendations of the Final Report of the Provincial Municipal Social Service Review. The P.M.S.S.R. report proposes more of a leadership role for municipalities in the planning and administration of child care services. The Ministry of Community and Social Services has announced that there will be a six month consultation process before the province decides how to proceed with the implementation of the P.M.S.S.R. recommendations.

It is recommended that Metropolitan Toronto take advantage of the framework proposed in the P.M.S.S.R. report to negotiate a satisfactory long-term solution to the current issues surrounding the planning and funding of child care services.

Recommendation 1

Metro should use the opportunity provided by the release of the Report of the Provincial Municipal Social Services Review, P.M.S.S.R., to find long term relief to current cost sharing imbalances through renegotiation of Metro-provincial roles and responsibilities in a broader range of community program areas.

2.3 Short Term Strategies

Negotiations within the framework of the P.M.S.S.R. recommendations will not focus solely on child care services. Indeed, the municipality's role in the planning, funding and delivery of child care will be discussed within a broader context of municipal responsibility for community services. Thus, the resolution of the long term structure of provincial-municipal responsibilities will take many months of negotiation and will probably entail the redrafting of provincial legislation.

While such negotiations are taking place, Metropolitan Toronto should continue to push the province to address the current cost sharing imbalance now. Metro has recently made some progress in one particular area of its child care budget having secured provincial agreement to increase its contribution to the funding of purchased child care services by $ 6.8 million. Negotiations to address the cost sharing imbalance in integrated services and in program administration show future promise.

It is of the utmost importance that Metro have an established cost sharing agreement with the province, as uncertainty over how much the province will cost share hampers the continued development of the system. Metro should renegotiate a cost sharing agreement with the province, with a formula agreed to by both levels of government. It is reasonable to anticipate that Metro's percentage of cost sharing could rise from the traditional 20% to 25 per cent.; this formula would be consistent with the approach recommended in the P.M.S.S.R. Report.

Recommendation 2

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to work to eliminate the present cost sharing imbalance and to negotiate with the province a mutually agreeable cost sharing formula for the immediate future.

In addition, Metro should continue to pursue interim funding strategies to address the current cost sharing imbalance. Strategies identified during the comprehensive review include the provincial pass–through of Metro claims eligible for federal cost sharing under the Canada Assistance Plan (C.A.P.) and increasing client revenue recovery for Family Benefits Assistance recipients through full utilization of the provisions of the Support to Employment Program (S.T.E.P.).

Staff have thoroughly researched and established the legislative and administrative feasibility of securing the federal 50% contribution to Metro for claims eligible for cost sharing under the Canada Assistance Plan. Federal willingness to make the payments provided the province makes the request on Metro's behalf was also confirmed.

It is recommended that Metropolitan Toronto aggressively pursue C.A.P. pass–through funding, which would reduce the 100 per cent municipal dollar contribution to child care services. Recovering the federal government's share of the cost sharing shortfall would reduce the accumulated shortfall by over 60%.

However, the provincial government must first agree to pass through Metro's request to the federal government; thus the province must be convinced that such an arrangement would be politically advantageous. To this date, the provincial government has not allowed this pass through of claims to occur. A communication strategy to heighten public awareness and increase public pressure on the Ontario government to pass through these claims should be developed and implemented early in 1990. (This idea is pursued further in Section 7 of this report).

Recommendation 3

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to pursue the provincial pass–through of Metro claims eligible for federal cost sharing under the Canada Assistance Plan.

The Support to Employment Program (S.T.E.P.) was identified as another possible source of new funds. S.T.E.P., the provincial response to S.A.R.C., is intended to remove the disincentives for social assistance recipients to enter the workforce by allowing parents to deduct child care costs as work–related expenses, thus enabling those on social assistance to retain their full entitlement and a larger portion of their earnings. However, in Metro the cost of licensed care is far above what this group can afford to pay, and there is concern that S.T.E.P. will provide an incentive to use the least expensive forms of informal child care.

Recommendation 4

Metro should continue to negotiate with the province the application of client revenue recovered from social assistance recipients eligible for the Support to Employment Program, S.T.E.P., to the subsidized child care system when these clients choose to use subsidized care.

3. SERVICE PLANNING

3.1 Planning Cycles

As described in the Introduction, the child care system in Metropolitan Toronto is an intricate set of partnerships, each player dependent on others for funding or service delivery. The partnership thrives on predictability. The crises of the past few years have been symptoms of the great degree of uncertainty which has plagued the system. As a major funder and regulator of child care, Metropolitan Toronto should play a pivotal role in the system. Therefore it is important that service planning be undertaken in a manner which will have maximum impact. A more stable planning environment will be one in which planning is in synchronization with the mandate of the Council and the provincial 3 year funding cycle.

If planning cycles are matched to coincide with Metro Council mandates, members of each newly elected council will be asked to decide at the beginning of their term what specific goals and objectives need to be achieved. Explicit targets and timeframes for each newly elected council will ensure political accountability for the development of the child care system.

A 10–year overall plan for child care services in Metropolitan Toronto will ensure that more long–range planning and thus more rational development of the child care system will occur. This approach will help position Metro to face the turn of the century from a position of social and economic strength and stability.

Recommendation 5

Planning for child care services should be done in cycles timed to match the mandate of the municipal term and to provide maximum impact on the provincial 3–year funding cycle established as part of the "New Directions" initiative.

Recommendation 6

Annual municipal funding commitments in support of Metro's multi-year service plan for child care should be confirmed after the funding cycle intentions of the province are announced.

3.2 Expansion of the Subsidy System

If parents of young children are to find employment or enter educational programs, they must have access to child care services. Access to high quality developmental programs is of significant direct benefit to children and families; the municipality as a whole also benefits, as accessible child care improves our ability to retain and attract businesses to ensure economic growth and lessens the long–term costs of welfare and remedial education.

Two main factors determine accessibility: the adequacy of supply of child care services and the cost families are required to bear for them.

Increasing the supply of child care spaces and subsidies was a major goal of the "Blueprint", which called for a growth rate of 6,000 licensed spaces and 3,000 subsidized spaces per year. As noted above, the current provincial criteria for funding new, subsidized spaces have adversely affected expansion of Metropolitan Toronto's child care system. For example, in 1986 Metro administered 1/2 of the total number of subsidy spaces in Ontario; by 1989, Metro's share had dropped to 1/3rd. In 1986 Metro delivered 1/3rd of Canada's subsidized child care services, but by 1989, Metro's share has fallen to 1/10th.

Consequently, the growth targets set forth in the "Blueprint" have not been achieved. Between 1986 and 1988, the net growth in licensed group centre spaces in Metro was 5,380, plus 1,000 private home day care spaces. During the same period the net growth in subsidy spaces was 2,177. Currently there are approximately 32,000 licensed spaces in Metro, including those in nursery school programs, and 28,275 spaces within the subsidy system.

The supply of licensed spaces is still inadequate to meet the municipality's needs. Approximately one–half of all parents would choose formal licensed care for their children if it were available, according to research conducted by the 1985 Parliamentary Task Force. Therefore, if cost of care were not an impediment, an additional 4070,000 infant, toddler and preschool spaces would be required in Metro.

Consequently, Metro's child care landscape is currently characterized by dramatically increased demands for spaces as well as for subsidy assistance, yet available subsidy spaces are fully utilized and the levels of subsidy expansion are being reduced. Waiting lists for subsidized spaces currently number more than 6,000 eligible children.

In order to promote accessibility to child care services, the municipal government must target and promote the growth of the whole system as well as administrating child care subsidies.

Recommendation 7

To make child care accessible to those who need it, Metropolitan Toronto should actively promote growth in licensed child care spaces as well as growth in subsidies for families who can not afford to pay the full cost of service. A minimum realistic response to the identified need requires that the present subsidy system double.

3.3 Metro's Service Focus

The Blueprint's goal of improved equity of access to licensed subsidized child care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers has not been achieved. Only in the directly operated municipal centres did significant relicensing to serve younger children occur. The costs of renovating and staffing to serve a higher proportion of infants and toddlers proved prohibitive to the child care community at large. In fact, the proportion of infants in the purchased group sector declined from 4.3 to 3.9 per. cent, compared to a growth from 1.8 to 6.9 per cent in the directly operated centres.

The "Blueprint" also identified developmentally and physically handicapped children as an underserved group. There are approximately 4,000 children in Metro under six years of age who are diagnostically labelled as developmentally or physically handicapped. Currently less than 200 of these children are served in integrated programs, most of which are located in directly operated municipal centres. Many of these programs are not available to infants and toddlers and accessibility to integrated programs is generally limited.

Metro is an innovator in special needs and supplementary programming. In 1980, municipal centres introduced integration programs for children with developmental, physical or multiple handicaps. To date, integration programs have been implemented in 27 directly operated centres. Leadership in this area continues with two major research grants awarded by the federal Child Care Initiatives Fund, to evaluate the impact and efficacy of integration and study the physical accessibility of integrated programs.

While continued movement towards a universally accessible child care system is implicit in Metro's belief that child care is an essential public service, in such challenging times it is no longer realistic to expect Metro to take the lead in all aspects of the child care service spectrum.

With the recent provincial decision to move towards full day junior and senior kindergarten and intensify child care service development in new schools, the lead responsibility for school age children is increasingly being assigned to the education community. This provides an opportunity for the directly operated centres to refocus their service priorities and by 1992 to begin the gradual phase–out of full time care for school–aged children.

To assist in the transition as lead responsibility for the care and education of school–aged children gradually shifts to the education sector, by the end of the decade, Metro, in partnership with provincial and municipal educational authorities and other public institutions, must explore alternate service strategies. Metro Council has recently endorsed that a joint review of the full continuum of care for children be undertaken in partnership with the educational community. It is imperative that planning, funding and delivery responsibilities for these services receive full public discussion in recognition of the future financial impact on the property tax base.

As lead responsibility for school–age children gradually shifts to the educational system, Metro should focus on serving the youngest children. These are currently the most underserved children and the ones whose parents are least experienced and least capable of lobbying for more service.

Recommendation 8

The prevailing service focus of Metro's child care system should become children 0–5 years of age. It is further recommended that Metro, in partnership with local and provincial educational authorities and other public institutions explore alternate service strategies which would allow the educational sector to assume primary responsibility for the care of school age children by the end of the decade. These discussions should also explore how this transfer of primary responsibility may occur without imposing further burden on the property tax base.

The present review has focused primarily on the future of the licensed and subsidized child care system within Metropolitan Toronto. By implementing the recommendations proposed, Metro will be well positioned to then consider the broader issues related to the full continuum of services to children which will be part of a future joint review with education. This review will encompass not only the formal child care system but also the many diverse programs and service sectors, both formal and informal, operated under a variety of auspices including education, recreation, the summer camp network etc. The comprehensive review is but the first step in clarifying, focusing and rationalizing Metro's future involvement in services to children.

Recommendation 9

By the end of the current term of Council, it is recommended that the jointly sponsored review which Council, on May 1, 1990, directed the Department to undertake with the education community, have been completed.

Recommendation 10

Metro's own directly operated programs should refocus on service to the youngest aged children and those most at risk. A transition plan which will allow for the eventual graduation of the current school–aged service component to alternate community programs should be developed.

3.4 Ward Based Service Planning

Geographic equity of access based on 1981 census data was achieved. Information pertaining to child population demographics, labour force participation rates and incidence of low income was used to develop the service level targets by area municipality. As more current census information becomes available Metro must continue to adjust its distribution of subsidy spaces to reflect shifts in the demographic and economic patterns across the Metropolitan community. This objective could more sensitively be achieved if subsidies were managed on a Metro ward basis rather than on a local municipality basis.

Service planning on a smaller scale would result in more sensitivity to local differences and priorities and thus greater integration of child care into the community or neighbourhood. Ward management of child care would also encourage the strong political 'linkages' necessary to build public support for Metro's continued commitment to leadership in child care. Service planning by Metro ward would allow Councillors more input into the child care system, by enabling them to more effectively assess and advocate the particular child care needs and preferences of their constituents.

A more vigourous use of the hub model concept, whereby child care services are linked administratively or physically to other community support services such as parent–child drop–in centres and toy lending libraries etc., is also recommended. This would help heighten public awareness of the contribution child care makes to community well–being and would also improve the linkages between child care programs and other community services. Wherever possible, Metro should aim for the co–location of child care programs and other community services for families. Again, this can best be achieved through planning at a ward level.

Proposed allocations of subsidy spaces, and availability of licensed group spaces by Metro ward are shown in detail in Appendix II.

Recommendation 11

Metro should introduce a ward–based service planning process which takes into account parental preference and considers a broad range of service models including "the hub", workplace child care, private home day care etc. and which ensures that the planning of child care services does not occur in isolation from other community services.

"Affirmative action" for younger children is recommended to promote the principle of age equity. Currently only 15 per cent. of all licensed spaces in the municipality are allocated to infants and toddlers yet over half of the clients on our waiting list which numbers more than 6,000 require infant or toddler care. The municipality's "first come first served" policy should be adjusted to accommodate service targets for younger aged children.

Special attention is also needed if access to care is to be improved in high risk neighbourhoods and for children and families with special needs. Metro Children's Services should work with the community to develop methods for realistically assessing needs in high risk areas and to special needs populations and for planning and implementing the additional services required to assure equity of access.

Recommendation 12

Subsidy space ceilings and the development of new spaces should be managed on a ward basis by age group with specific targets and timeframes to improve accessibility for the most underserved children and communities.

3.5 Planning for Capital Development

Metropolitan Toronto Boards of Education have begun discussions concerning space used in the schools for child care programs in light of the recent provincial announcement concerning full day kindergarten programs. Metro should research the effects of expanded kindergarten programs on the supply of space available in the schools for child care programs and begin to develop plans to replace the loss of these child care sites in other suitable community sites including community centres, recreational complexes, churches, etc.

It is unlikely that private operators will be able to meet the target for more licensed spaceswithout some form of capital assistance from Metropolitan Toronto. Capital

development would allow Metro to address the current service shortage without assuming sole financial responsibility for the operation of new centres and without expanding its own directly operated service system.

In the early 1970's and again in the late 1980's, Metropolitan Toronto was actively involved in capital development of new municipally operated child care sites. The municipally operated portfolio will soon reach its optimal size, and thus it is proposed that future capital development should focus on improving accessibility to underserved groups in the wider community.

"Build–to–lease" would be a cost–efficient strategy for capital development, as building expenditures could be recovered on an amortized basis through lease costs recognized in purchased per diem rates. If Metro is involved at the ground–level, it is more likely that the municipality's own quality standards will be met in the resulting facility.

Recommendation 13

To improve accessibility of child care services, particularly for those age groups and those communities which are currently underserved, Metro should take a more active role in developing and, when required, operating new spaces. The capital program should be reframed to allow Metro to "build to lease" to community operators meeting the municipality's Operating Criteria. This capital capability would also allow the eventual conversion of existing licensed stock for school aged children to meet the requirements of younger aged children.

3.6 The Role of Private Home Day Care (PHDC)

Private home day care was originally developed to provide the consistency of care giver and the home–like environment many parents preferred for their infants. It has also provided the individual flexibility required by families working irregular or flexible hours and has become the service of choice of many families for a variety of other reasons including: capability to meet special needs and cultural sensitivities, opportunity for sibling grouping and being based in one's own neighbourhood.

In consultation with the Private Home Day Care Association of Metro Toronto it is time for Metro to explore strategies which will enable Agencies to provide more service to younger aged children and families facing special challenges within the service planning model identified in recommendations # 10 and 11.

Recommendation 14

Metropolitan Toronto, in consultation with the Private Home Day Care Association of Metropolitan Toronto should explore strategies to enable agencies to provide more service to younger aged children and those families requiring more flexible hours of care without undermining private home day care as the choice of a broader cross section of families attracted by its service features.

4. CLIENT SERVICES

4.1 Subsidized Clients

The rising cost of living in this municipality has made affordability a general Metro issue, not just a child care concern. Increasingly, Metropolitan Toronto is becoming a community for the rich and poor but not for the middle income earner.

The cost of licensed child care significantly affects accessibility, and both factors are intimately linked to quality. Given the overall high costs of living in Metro, affordability is the single most important issue facing families who need child care in this municipality. The costs of child care services represent a significant barrier to access to these services for middle income families, and a great number of families in Metro cannot obtain licensed child care without subsidy assistance.

Historically, Metro has supported a shift from the current needs test to an income test to determine subsidy eligibility for child care. Income testing would be administratively simpler, less intrusive for clients and more consistent with Metro's belief that child care is an essential public service. However, since the abandonment of the proposed new federal child care legislation, and because needs testing is still required as part of Ontario's cost sharing agreement under the Canada Assistance Plan, Metro is required to continue to use the provincially approved needs test.

In order to provide subsidies to the widest possible cross-section of the community, Metro interprets federal and provincial funding formulae as broadly as possible. To reflect Metro's conviction that child care is an essential public service and therefore all who are eligible under the provincial approved needs test are equally entitled to subsidized care, a "first come, first served" policy for subsidized spaces was adopted by Metro Council in 1984.

If "affordability" is not defined locally, there is a very real danger that it will also not be defined realistically. Therefore, Metro should continue to exercise the fullest discretion in interpreting the provincial needs testing guidelines for determining subsidy eligibility, in keeping with the municipality's commitment to child care as a public service.

Recommendation 15

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to broaden the eligibility band for child care subsidies to the limits of municipal discretion in recognition of factors unique to this municipality that create higher child care needs than elsewhere in Ontario.

The asset ceilings currently allowed under CAP do not fairly determine eligibility for subsidy assistance and are inconsistent with the objective embodied in recommendation 14 above. The current criteria discriminate against some groups with very high child care needs, such as refugees and immigrants who are saving money in order to obtain permanent housing. It is recommended that as suggested in "Transitions", "negotiations should take place with the Federal government regarding the raising of asset ceilings. An immediate increase should be granted in the allowable limits to everyone, by at least the amount of inflation since the last increase in 1981, subject to CAP approval."

Recommendation 16

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to advocate for the realistic updating of the current asset ceilings on the provincially approved needs test used to determine child care subsidy eligibility.

The discussion about service planning drew attention to the fact that infants and toddlers are currently the most underserved age groups in the municipality. Metro should try to use its administration of the subsidy system to address this under–representation. In order to improve age equity, a set number of subsidies should be reserved for each underserved age group and administered on a first come first served basis.

Our "first come first served" policy helps ensure access to the subsidized child care system and is a cornerstone to our belief that child care is a public service. However, it is possible to adjust its application to increase the access capability of underserved age groups.

Recommendation 17

Metropolitan Toronto should retain the "first come first served" placement policy and ensure its application within the context of established geographic and age equity targets.

4.2 General Client Services

The comprehensive review examined ways in which services could be increased for families who contribute to the child care system through taxes but who do not receive subsidies. One mechanism would be a comprehensive registry of child care services, including parenting support and resource services such as community drop–in programs for children, toy–lending libraries, parent–child resource centres, etc. Metro Children's Services is well positioned to broker such an information and referral service, since the department already has access to licensed vacancy information on a weekly basis and extensive knowledge of the types of care offered, the groups served, and the cost of care in privately and publicly operated programs.

A comprehensive child care registry would assure better service to a wider range of clients, would support improved local planning, decision making and service advocacy activities. It would also help increase the public profile and enhance public understanding of the range of child care services provided. Access to Metro's comprehensive child care registry would help simplify the work of social development and social service agencies like the Community Information Centre in providing their information, advice and referral services.

It is therefore important for Metro Children's Services to explore how a comprehensive child care service registry can be used to provide information, referral and advisory services to a broader cross section of Metro residents.

Recommendation 18

To serve a broader cross-section of the needs of Metro's residents with respect to child care, Metro should develop and implement a plan for the provision of a wider variety of information, referral and advisory services.

4.3 Multicultural Access to Service

It is estimated that one third of Metropolitan Toronto's population has a mother tongue other than English or French. In addition, more than one fifth of the municipality's population is a member of a minority racial group. In the coming decade, special attention must be paid to ensure that the child care system is responsive to the needs of such a rich range of cultures, languages and ethnic backgrounds. Ongoing in-service education of staff, employment equity strategies and new service priorities will undoubtedly be required in the 90's if the complexion of the service provided is to reflect the ethnolinguistic characteristics of the families and children served.

In addition, Metro has been designated as a French language service area. The municipal government should aim to improve its support to French language service within the child care system by recruiting and assigning Francophone professionals to the growing French language child care program portfolio.

Recommendation 19

In recognition of the diversity of ethnocultural backgrounds and the variety of languages used by the client group served, Metro should work with the child care community to make the services provided more sensitive to the needs of the children and families served.

Recommendation 20

In recognition that Metropolitan Toronto has been designated as a French Language Service area, Metro should improve its own capability to provide support to Francophone services being developed in this community.

5. SERVICE SUPPORT

5.1 Recognition of Costs of Service Delivery

Metro Children's Services has a long tradition of providing support to other child care service providers. Through its own experience as a major service provider, as well as its mandated role as an administrator and regulator of services, and its historic role as a leader and advocate, the municipality is well placed to engage in a variety of activities which can support the child care community. The comprehensive review identified a range of such activities in which Metro should engage.

The Metropolitan corporation has recognized and supported with 100 per cent. municipal dollars the actual cost of service delivery for the last three years and continues to lobby the Province of Ontario to recognize these costs. As noted earlier in the report these efforts have recently met with some success. The province recently agreed to increase their funding contribution to private centres under subsidy contract to recognize the market rates paid in 1989.

Metro has also demonstrated unprecedented municipal commitment by fully funding subsidy expansion spaces when the provincial government refused in 1988 to continue its historic pattern of allocation to this community. By financing with 100 per cent. municipal dollars the cost-sharing shortfall in the purchased service program, Metro prevented this cost from being passed on to full-fee paying parents. Although child care is viewed as a partnership between 3 levels of government and the parent consumer, Metro does not believe that full fee paying parents should be expected to underwrite the subsidy system.

Recognition of the actual costs in a cost sharing arrangement is the only fair and equitable way to ensure high quality, stable child care services to those families who need subsidy assistance. Full-fee paying parents should not be expected to subsidize the child care system through unfair fee increases, which would amount to a penalty for failing to qualify for subsidies.

If operators are expected to subsidize the service, the municipality can expect centre closures that will further exacerbate the licensed child care space shortage. Many operators have indicated they will not accept subsidized clients if they are not compensated for their real service delivery costs. Clearly it is unacceptable that providers of an essential public service be expected to subsidize that service.

Recommendation 21

Metropolitan Toronto should continue to provide adequate financial support to community operators under purchase of service contract while continuing to press the Province of Ontario to recognize and pay their fair share of the associated costs. These costs should reflect realistically the costs of delivering care in the Metropolitan Toronto community.

5.2 Quality Assurance

To reap the benefits of child care as outlined in the "Metro Case for Child Care" found in Appendix II, Metro must continue to attend to those factors known to influence quality of service.

Research has consistently demonstrated that high quality child care facilitates learning and stimulates cognitive, emotional and physical development during the critical early childhood years. Increasingly, the expectation of the community is that child care will be a developmental community service rather than a basic custodial or "babysitting" service. Accordingly, while acknowledging that child care helps meet the special needs of parents engaged in employment or involved in education or training, Metro views the service as child–focused.

For many years Metro Children's Services has recognized the following as key determinants of quality in child care services: training, experience and stability of the professional teaching/care–giving staff; program content and development; informed parental involvement; group size; the ratio of children to teachers within centres and to providers within supervised private homes; and the suitability of the physical facility.

Metro has made significant gains in some of these areas since 1986. Remuneration and benefits for staff in directly operated centres are among the highest in the country; salaries have also improved significantly in community programs; innovation in programming has continued, with highly successful integrated programs for special needs children, intergenerational programs, and supplementary programs for high-risk neighbourhoods; parents have become more involved in centres and their feedback is being increasingly sought.

However, despite continued advocacy for smaller group sizes and better staff:child ratios since 1986, there has been limited success in influencing change in provincial standards. There is still much controversy surrounding the definition of a space and the length of the operational day. There is also a need to rationalize the staff:child ratios and group sizes by developmental stages, not chronological age, as the current standards are philosophically inconsistent with the definition of child care as a developmental service.

Metro's insistence on high quality has become particularly important since other levels of government have begun to back away from the concept of child care as a public service, thus weakening the emphasis on the developmental benefits of a formal licensed program.

Municipal quality assurance role is key to the maintenance of a system that is truly child-oriented and committed to high standards of care. Ontario's licensing regulations regarding physical facilities, staff:child ratios, group size, training requirements for staff, nutrition, health and safety are higher than those of most other provinces. However, Metro's Operating Criteria for licensed programs providing care to subsidized clients are even more specifically and objectively defined. These criteria were originally developed and have since been refined in consultation with the full service community.

Metro's standards are also more stringently enforced than the province's. Centres chosen to serve children who receive subsidies are monitored at least four times a year instead of just once. There is no question that this increased monitoring has a positive effect on the quality of care offered in centres with purchase of service agreements.

Indeed, the 1989 Provincial Audit stated that provincial licensing and monitoring practices "were inadequate to ensure compliance with the... Day Nurseries Act and Regulation, and Ministry established guidelines... Inappropriate day care licenses were issued to many centres. The Ministry has not adequately monitored the operations of chronic problem day carecentres. Furthermore, centres which violate health and safety standards year after year do not have their licences revoked."

Whereas historically the province has focused primarily on enforcement, Metro acts not only as an inspector but also as a consultant to privately operated centres under subsidy contract with the municipality. This hands–on approach encourages continuous program development and ensures that quality issues can be resolved before they become serious problems.

Clear, measurable operating criteria and consistent enforcement of them are crucial to the promotion of quality in all centres and agencies with purchase of service agreements; thus Metro must continue its quality assurance role. Through the comprehensive review, clearer criteria promoting increased provider accountability for service quality in both centre–based and private home day care were developed. It is recommended that these updated Metro Operating Criteria be adopted in principle and field tested during 1990.

It should be stressed that quality assurance benefits all children who attend centres that have purchase of service agreements, not just those who receive subsidies. A continued quality assurance role is another important way Metro can serve more families than just those in receipt of subsidy.

With the release of the PMSSR report and its suggestion that service management responsibility for child care should reside with local government, Metro should begin planning for the rationalization of quality assurance procedures: the local quality assurance role could be combined with the provincial licensing function, and both tasks could be performed by Metro.

Recommendation 22

Quality being the cornerstone of Metropolitan Toronto's child care system, this municipality should continue to champion high standards and improved programming through continued use of the Metro Operating Criteria and through continuing its role in program inspection and quality assurance.

5.3 In–Service Training and Administrative Support

High quality child care starts with trained professionals, and since 1986 Metro has made important strides in promoting the professionalization of child care providers. The training materials and programs developed for use in the directly operated municipal program should also be available to improve training options available to the centres and agencies throughout the community. Metro has already secured a grant from the Child Care Initiatives Fund to publish and distribute for general use the curriculum development training packages created for municipal centres. Further exploration of the role Metro can play as a catalyst, facilitator, or provider of in–service training for the day care community is needed. In addition to matters directly related to program, the changing legislation governing the field of child care suggests many ways Metro could assist (e.g. WHMIS, FIPPA, reasonable accommodation, etc.).

Recommendation 23

Metro should make available to community child care programs its in-service training packages for curriculum and the customized packages it has developed in response to legislatively mandated training (e.g., WHMIS).

In addition to sharing its training resources, Metro can also assist privately operated service providers by sharing some of the Children's Services Division's administrative and management expertise and capability.

It is in the community's interests that programs which receive public funding are efficiently managed. Metro has already demonstrated the success of interim management support in helping centres weather leadership, staffing and/or financial crises. An expanded troubleshooting role for Metro could help prevent unnecessary centre closures and the associated service disruptions and hardships to clients and staff.

Recommendation 24

Metro should continue to make consultative assistance and program support services available to community child care programs experiencing difficulties in financial management, organizational development, or program effectiveness.

5.4 Parental Participation

The Blueprint recognized that parents are partners in ensuring quality child care. An informed parent is better able to assess the quality of care the child receives. Since 1986 Metro has concentrated on providing parents with information about quality determinants and the range of child care options available in their work and home communities. However, parents need to have a more direct voice in the future of the child care system generally.

Metro should continue to encourage parental participation on centre boards and advisory committees by helping these bodies access the training, information and support services they require.

The cost of parental involvement in centre administration should be recognized in centre budgets.

Recommendation 25

Metro should continue to encourage parental involvement in all child care programs by helping parent advisory committees and parent boards access the information and support services they require.

5.5 Pay Equity

The "Blueprint" called for enhancement of salaries and career development options for teachers and providers in the licensed child care sector, and Metro has become a leader by example in its directly operated municipal centres; staff qualifications and remuneration are among the highest in Canada.

However, generally low salaries and an absence of job benefits are driving many experienced child care workers from the field; it is particularly difficult to attract early childhood educators (ECEs) to Metropolitan Toronto because of the shortage of affordable housing and the relatively high cost of living.

This problem is compounded by the restricted capability of the Community Colleges to enrol even those who want to work in child care. It should be noted that there is increasing competition for the dwindling supply of trained ECEs, many of whom opt to enter the school system where they receive better salaries and benefits as teachers' aides. Research has shown that a high turnover in care–givers negatively affects the quality of child care by creating instability in programs and child–adult relationships.

The comprehensive review considered the effects that the shortage of trained child care providers and high rate of turnover in centre staff may have on the quality of the municipality's child care system. If ECEs are required to subsidize the system by being underpaid, the scarcity of trained professionals will become more severe and the quality of the overall system will suffer.

Metro's efforts to directly address these problems by offering to cost share with the province its Direct Operating Grant (intended to increase child care staff salaries) by topping it up with an additional 20% municipal contribution were refused. The province chose to administer and finance the Direct Operating Grant independently.

There is concern within the child care community regarding the recourse under the pay equity legislation for child care staff. While the receipt of the Direct Operating Grant from the province puts licensed programs in a contractual arrangement with the province and brings them technically under the pay equity umbrella they face a further obstacle. There is no male–dominated job within most centres' establishment to which a child care teacher can be compared for the purpose of job evaluation and compensation determination. Unless a creative solution can be found, most day care teachers will not benefit from the Pay Equity legislation.

Metro is preparing to post its pay equity plans for its own staff and is discussing the potential cost sharing impact with the province. Any new wage rates negotiated for staff in directly operated municipal programs will result in adjustments to the budget guideline salary ceilings for purchased programs, which may increase the cost of child care and further exacerbate the affordability problem.

Metro must urge the provincial government to address the lack of real access to the legislation afforded the child care community. Allowing the use of male–dominated jobs in the public sector as comparator positions for the purpose of establishing pay equity is but one solution to be explored. Since Metro as a public sector employer must institute pay equity

programs in directly operated municipal centres, these centres may have an unfair advantage over privately operated centres in attracting ECEs. Therefore pay equity should be extended throughout the entire child care community.

At the same time, any adjustments to staff salaries resulting from implementation of provincial legislation should be eligible for full cost sharing under CAP. Metro should continue to advocate to the province the importance of pay equity to quality of care, and urgethat fair remuneration for child care professionals should be fully cost shared.

Given that pay equity may create higher salaries for ECEs and thus increase the cost of child care, it is recommended that Metro conduct some community education on the link between salaries/working conditions and quality in child care centres.

Recommendation 26

Recognizing that access to the benefits of Pay Equity legislation is essential to maintaining and improving the quality of early childhood education in community-based as well as municipally operated child care programs, Metro should advocate that the province responsibly address the issue of fair access to the legislation by child care professionals.

5.6 Staffing Ratios

In centres that serve a large proportion of special needs families, therapeutic programming and more intensive communication between staff and parents are often necessary for a successful service. These added pressures often require staffing over and above the provincial ratios established in the Day Nurseries Act. The budget approval process should recognize a supplementary staffing factor sensitive to the changing needs of child care centres with a large concentration of clients who require special services.

Recommendation 27

Metro should recognize the need to maintain improved staffing levels in child care programs serving clients who require special or intensive services and should advocate with the province for full cost sharing of this necessary support.

5.7 Day Care Advisory Committee

The discussion in this section of the report has suggested how, by focusing on particular activities and roles, the Metropolitan Corporation can support other providers of child care to best effect. However, as noted earlier in the report, the child care system functions as a set of partnerships. A successful partnership is one in which the partners are able to support each other. Hence, the comprehensive review identified the importance of the advisory and catalytic role that service providers and consumers can play. Since 1975, this role has

beenfacilitated by the Day Care Advisory Committee (DCAC) which was appointed to advise the Community Services and Housing Committee of Metro Council on child care issues.

It is important that the DCAC continue to perform its advisory function. In reaffirming the value of the DCAC, Metro should ensure that the committee's membership is fairly representative of the variety of service provider and consumer interests within the child care community. It is time that parents in particular play a more significant role in shaping and controlling the future of child care.

Recommendation 28

Recognizing the value of advice from both service consumers and service providers with respect to present service operation and future service planning, Metro should reaffirm the Metro Day Care Advisory Committee as a body appointed to advise Community Services and Housing Committee on child care issues. Metro should also direct the DCAC to ensure through its membership structure, its operating practices and its meeting forum that it fairly represents the variety of consumer and provider interests within the Metro child care community.

6. THE METROPOLITAN CORPORATION

6.1 Workplace Child Care

Much of the comprehensive review necessarily concentrated on Metro's activities as a provider, funder and supporter of child care services. However, significantly, discussion also centred on opportunities for Metro to enhance the general child care system through its own corporate policies and priorities.

Under this corporation's existing workplace child care policy, 55 municipally operated centres and 3 directly operated private home day care agencies are officially designated by Metro Council as workplace child care sites. Metro employees currently enjoy admission priority to 400 of these spaces. 100 per cent Metro dollars are financing significant cost sharing shortfalls for these centres. Without committing additional dollars to these centres, the Corporation could rationalize its current contribution as financial support for its workplace child care policy.

Metro's leadership is key to keeping workplace child care on the public agenda and raising corporate consciousness of child care as an effective support to employment and business. Therefore, Metro should continue to enhance its own workplace child care policies, as part of a corporate human resources strategy for municipal employees. Corporate personnel and Metro Children's Services should research and develop future options for the enhancement of Metro's workplace child care capabilities.

Recommendation 29

Metropolitan Toronto, as a corporation and an employer should continue to lead by example and continue its workplace child care policy development activities.

6.2 Child Care and Economic Development

Based upon the work of its Economic Development Division, Metropolitan Council has adopted an Economic Development Strategy. During the comprehensive review, it was clear that accessible, high quality child care should be considered as part of any sound strategy for the promotion of economic development.

Businesses derive considerable benefit from the availability of child care. Those companies that do provide child care services for their employees, whether information and referral or actual on-site centres, directly benefit from increased productivity, heightened worker morale, reduced absenteeism, reduced employee turnover and improved public relations. Companies that help meet the child care needs of their employees are seen as good corporate citizens.

Child care is important to corporations in another respect, in that developmental child-centred care helps counteract the negative effects of poverty and thus cultivates future economic productivity. Corporations that invest in day care improve the productivity of their current work force as well as their future work force.

Metro through the Economic Development Division should review how the availability of child care within this municipality could be used to advantage as part of the economic development strategy. A municipality that has demonstrated leadership in child care should be seen to be a good place to do business.

Recommendation 30

Metropolitan Toronto, through the Economic Development Division should review how the availability of child care within this municipality could be used to advantage as part of the economic development strategy.

6.3 Research

Metro should preserve its leadership role in program development, service model design and testing by seeking out new, untapped funding sources. An expanded research role would raise Metro's profile while enabling the municipality to further improve the quality of the service it delivers and better understand the community it serves. To date, Metro has been awarded three grants from the federal Child Care Initiatives Fund to study various aspects of child care.

To promote more applied and evaluative research of its programs and policies, Metro should build more linkages with community colleges, universities and particularly graduate schools. Especially valuable would be any research related to increasing public awareness of and support for child care.

Recommendation 31

Metropolitan Toronto should promote increased involvement in applied and evaluative research related to child care to improve program quality and better understand the needs of the community it serves.

6.4 Organizational Structure of the Children's Services Division

As many of the recommendations contained in this report illustrate the Children's Services Division is engaged in two distinct sets of activities. On the one hand the Division is responsible for the planning, funding and administration of the subsidized child care system. On the other hand, the Division is a direct operator of child care services. These two sets of responsibilities are directed towards different and separate operational objectives. It is suggested that the Children's Services Division should be restructured to recognize the separateness of these functions.

Recommendation 32

Metropolitan Toronto should separate the planning, funding, and administration of the subsidized child care system from the direct operation of municipal child care programs by making appropriate revisions in the organizational structure of the Children's Services Division.

7. BUILDING COMMITMENT TO CHILD CARE

7.1 A Case for Child Care

During the course of the comprehensive review, the role that child care can and does play in the social and economic life of the community was clear. The many points raised in discussion of this role have been summarized and are included in an appendix to this report as a "Metro Case for Child Care".

As has been alluded to in much of the present report, the case for child care is not well known enough to the business community or to the general public who may not be direct consumers of child care services. Therefore, the future health of the child care system is going to depend to a large extent on building a broadly based commitment to child care. The recommendations in this document focus on what Metro itself can do. It is recommended that, consistent with its tradition of leadership in the child care field, Metro should also play an active role in fostering the development of a commitment to child care.

Metro–based research currently underway, such as the longitudinal evaluation of integrated programming, will strengthen the Case for Child Care. As this document should be used by Metro as part of its public education plan to attract and retain corporations and encourage their support of child care services, the principles should be reaffirmed using data specific to Metro. It is hoped that further research may point out new benefits specific to Metro that are not included in the current document. Metro should seek research funding from other sources and build closer links with academic and research institutions engaged in applied and evaluative investigations of child care.

Recommendation 33

Metro should further strengthen the "Metro Case for Child Care" developed as part of the Comprehensive Review discussions, reinforcing the conclusions contained with findings from locally-based research.

7.2 Communications Strategy

An effective communication strategy is essential especially when dealing with issues related to the funding of child care.

A continued mix of public and user support to fund the child care delivery system is advocated. Since everyone benefits from child care, whether or not they have children, everyone should contribute financially to the system through taxes.

However, as parents have a right to choose the care arrangement they deem best for their children, they have a corresponding responsibility to contribute to the cost of the care they choose. Those who use the system experience more tangible, immediate benefits from it than those who do not, and thus it is proper that they make a larger contribution to funding it. Metro believes that corporate contribution strategies for financing child care should also be explored. Although it would be inappropriate for the private sector to take on full responsibility for what is essentially a public service, it cannot be ignored that few corporations make financial contributions to the child care system proportional to the benefits they derive from it. It is both reasonable and proper to expect the business community to bear some of the costs of providing a service from which it gains so much.

Metro should maintain its leadership role in research, policy development and advocacy in order to encourage greater recognition by other levels of government of the importance of child care services. In addition to continued dialogue between Metro Councillors and elected representatives at the other two levels of government, a comprehensive public communications strategy should be developed to ensure that the general public is better informed about the social, economic and financial benefits of child care to the country.

Metro should undertake an aggressive public education campaign to publicize both the benefits of child care to the municipality and events that created the current funding crisis. Public education will ensure that the residents of Metro are supportive of the municipality's significant investment in child care and increase public pressure on the federal and provincial governments to maximize cost sharing available under existing legislation.

Along with an enhanced advocacy role, Metro can protect the child care system from erosion through strengthened planning and development. The current patchwork quilt approach to child care, with its multitude of funding paths, is a threat to the maintenance of an accessible, affordable, high quality system. The creation of an integrated, rationalized system can only occur when the important economic and social role child care plays in community development is recognized.

Recommendation 34

Metro should develop and implement a comprehensive public communications strategy to ensure that the public becomes better informed about the social, economic and financial benefits of child care and to secure public support for a more rational approach to financing child care as a basic public service.

Recommendation 35

Metro should ensure that the child care system is considered a vital part of the Social Development Strategy for Metropolitan Toronto so that development of child care is tied to the many social and economic factors influencing it.

8. UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The comprehensive review process was not able to resolve every issue raised. One unresolved issue related to a long term resolution of the cost sharing crisis. However, as was pointed out in Section 2 of this report, the recommendations of the PMSSR may provide a framework for a solution.

A second question which was raised during the comprehensive review dealt with the link between service quality and auspices. In this case it was felt that further study was required.

Metro's policy to date has been to purchase only quality care, based on a centre or agency's ability to meet the municipal operating criteria, regardless of auspices.

Canadian and American based research on quality confirms the conclusions contained in the "Blueprint" that quality is influenced by the training and stability of the care–giver, by the adult:child ratio and group size, by the program content, the suitability of the physical plant and the equipment and by the degree of parent involvement. More recent research also suggests that programs that are subject to regular monitoring and enforcement of service standards exhibit more consistently high quality of care. While a number of reviews have been done in other jurisdictions concerning the impact of service auspices on quality issues, more locally–based research is needed to evaluate this aspect within Metro Toronto. Before any changes in service purchasing practices can be entertained a comparative evaluation of service quality in public, nonprofit and commercial programs is needed. Also, it is recommended that the Social Development Strategy initiative review and clarify Metro's future purchasing policies with respect to human services.

Recommendation 36

Metro-specific investigation of service quality in public, non-profit and commercial child care settings is needed to examine the effect of service auspices on program delivery. It is also recommended that the Social Development Strategy initiative review and clarify Metro's future purchasing policies with respect to human services.

9. CONCLUSIONS

It is a difficult time to be a leader, but leadership is urgently needed if Metropolitan Toronto is to protect the excellence of its child care system. The infrastructure is in place. What is needed is the will and commitment to sustain Metro's outstanding vision of child care as an essential public service that should be affordable and accessible to all who need it by the end of the twentieth century.

The effects of this vision are already evident in Metropolitan Toronto. Support for this service demonstrates that Metro values its children and recognizes their basic rights. High quality child care is improving the lives of the children and families who use the service, and demonstrating our collective commitment to values of equality, fairness, and human development. Every resident of this municipality has a stake in ensuring the maintenance and expansion of our child care system. As taxpayers, we all benefit from the availability of high quality child care that encourages the business community to remain in this area, enables families to obtain financial independence, and is proven to be a cost-effective method of primary prevention for children at risk.

APPENDIX I

The contributions of the following individuals to the Comprehensive Review of Child Care in Metropolitan Toronto are gratefully acknowledged:

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Councillor Brian Ashton
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Councillor Maria Augimeri
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APPENDIX II

Current and Projected Service Profiles by Metro Ward

Appendix A

Equity Allocation of Subsidy Spaces to Metro Wards

(Based on anticipated 1990 subsidy ceiling of 19,019)
(and showing Licensed Capacities of Group Centres)

Metro Ward	Children 0 - 9	Need factor	Eligible children	Percent of Metro	Equity Spaces	Licensed Spaces: Total	Infant	Toddler	Pre-sch.	Sch-age
1 East York	10,600	0.56	5,915	4.8	913	1,166	64	98	651	353
2 Lakeshore-Queensway	8,120	0.54	4,369	3.5	666	1,131	52	134	665	280
3 Kingsway-Humber	6,900	0.40	2,753	2.2	418	683	40	65	440	138
4 Markland-Centennial	7,240	0.40	2,874	2.3	437	668	40	132	358	138
5 Rexdale-Thistletown	10,825	0.46	5,001	4.1	780	1,087	48	149	685	205
6 North York Humber	10,950	0.54	5,902	4.8	913	729	35	70	426	198
7 Black Creek	12,815	0.58	7,420	6.0	1,141	1,342	45	150	820	327
8 North York Spadina	8,365	0.54	4,500	3.6	685	1,483	107	193	857	326
9 North York Centre South	6,135	0.37	2,276	1.8	342	429	30	77	272	50
10 North York Centre	5,335	0.44	2,321	1.9	361	816	40	76	379	321
11 Don Parkway	9,135	0.51	4,622	3.7	704	1,650	56	152	824	618
12 Seneca Heights	10,160	0.38	3,840	3.1	590	1,224	12	70	732	410
13 Scarborough Bluffs	10,105	0.52	5,275	4.3	818	1,496	74	136	869	417
14 Scarborough Wexford	6,555	0.48	3,153	2.6	494	684	20	75	414	175
15 Scarborough City Centre	11,310	0.50	5,678	4.6	875	1,181	60	142	670	309
16 Scarborough Highland Creek	12,475	0.46	5,714	4.6	875	891	56	120	526	189
17 Scarborough Agincourt	10,285	0.37	3,755	3.0	571	496	6	45	262	183
18 Scarborough Malvern	14,535	0.33	4,860	3.9	742	615	16	82	370	147
19 High Park	8,305	0.59	4,908	4.0	761	756	10	70	391	285
20 Trinity Niagara	7,580	0.59	4,442	3.6	685	967	36	130	518	283
21 Davenport	10,125	0.59	6,004	4.9	932	784	30	85	443	226
22 North Toronto	7,030	0.44	3,121	2.5	475	503	10	25	242	226
23 Midtown	4,760	0.42	1,986	1.6	304	835	36	82	467	250
24 Downtown	3,470	0.63	2,172	1.8	342	1,674	144	250	1,035	285
25 Don River	9,740	0.62	6,010	4.9	932	1,283	36	150	634	463
26 East Toronto	9,545	0.52	4,963	4.0	761	1,034	30	45	610	349
27 York Humber	9,060	0.59	5,370	4.4	837	935	58	116	611	150
28 York Eglinton	7,020	0.59	4,170	3.4	647	486	40	40	310	96

APPENDIX III

THE METRO CASE FOR DAY CARE

Metro's future thrust should be in the area of public education, in order to demonstrate to the people of Metropolitan Toronto that increased spending on child care is a wise investment of their tax dollars.

Child care can be marketed to the community by making a business case for the service: it is necessary for the economic survival and growth of the municipality, improves our ability as a municipality to retain and attract businesses, lessens the long–term costs of welfare and remedial education, and is a cost-effective way of improving the lives and productivity of the children and families who directly use the service. We are all children, parents, the business community, taxpayers, government stakeholders in a successful child care system.

However, there is a serious lack of public awareness about child care: in a December 1988 Environics poll, the overwhelming majority of respondents either did not know or did not answer when asked how they would rate day care in Metro. Yet 44% of the respondents felt that government should be spending more on child care, even though it might increase their taxes.

These findings indicate that it is not difficult to sell this service to the public; once people are informed about child care issues, they support increased local leadership.

BACKGROUND: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD CARE

Public perceptions of child care have changed dramatically over the years. When the Canada Assistance Plan providing federal cost sharing for child care services delivered through provincial and municipal governments was established 22 years ago, child care was viewed primarily as a welfare program that enabled lower income women to enter the labour force.

As the structure of the family changed, so did public perceptions of child care. In the 1970s, availability of child care began to be viewed as an equity issue affecting the ability of women to enjoy true equality within society by enabling them to pursue careers and increase their earning capacity.

Child care is no longer just a women's issue; it is an economic necessity for many Metro families. Since the mid–70s, the growing demand for child care has been driven not by poverty but by the continuing expectations of women for careers, rising expectations regarding the standard of living, financial pressure of high rates of inflation, and steadily growing rates of divorce and single parent families. These trends have been considerably more pronounced in Metro than elsewhere in the province and indeed the country.

As the demand for child care services expanded, early childhood educators were encouraged to conduct academic research into the early learning experiences of children. Their findings led to a new understanding of the importance of the early years of life, and consequently child care has come to be viewed as an important developmental service that enhances children's abilities and skills while stimulating early learning.

Over the past fifteen years, studies have shown that high quality child care is an especially effective form of primary prevention for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. For special needs children, the success of integration programs in Metro demonstrates that it is more cost-effective to integrate special groups into existing child care programs than it is to develop new services for them.

THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENT

Reliable child care is an economic necessity for many Canadian families, but especially in Metro, where the cost of living is high. Sixty–five percent of Metro families who receive subsidies are headed by single parents; 66.3% of them either work or attend school. Without child care, many of them would be forced to choose between leaving their children alone during the day or forsaking employment or education.

What often gets overlooked is that child care is as economically essential to the Corporation of Metropolitan Toronto as it is to the individual families directly using the service. The availability of child care significantly affects Metro's ability to retain and attract business and thus has a direct, long–term impact on municipal revenues and the overall financial health of the municipality's economy.

A trend common in American cities has begun to emerge in Metro over the past few years: businesses leave the city for the suburbs, where the cost of living is lower and it is easier to attract a stable workforce. The business community needs incentives to remain in or relocate to the municipality, particularly since the introduction of the commercial concentration tax will make Metro an even more expensive place to do business.

Child care is one such support to the business community. Family and worklife research has demonstrated that accessibility of child care is directly tied to productivity: employees with child care problems are less productive, more prone to absenteeism, and more likely to leave their jobs. Already there is a serious labour shortage in many sectors of Metro's economy, particularly retail and service. The labour shortage is exacerbated by the child care shortage: if parents cannot find child care, businesses cannot find employees, and they will go where they can do so.

A PAY NOW OR PAY LATER PROPOSITION

Money spent on child care is not simply an investment in present–day productivity but, in the most basic terms, an investment in the future. For children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, high quality child care provides a head start that makes them significantly more likely to develop their full potential.

It is far less expensive to prevent the long–term problems associated with impoverished childhood than to fix them; child care is cost–effective when compared to remedial programs. One U.S. study endorsed by the Canadian Council on Children on Youth found that every dollar invested in quality preschool education returns nearly five times that amount in savings from later education and employment programs.

The child care system is also considerably less expensive than the education system, and it fulfils an educational function during the critical early childhood years. The comparative per hour cost of child care for children four years of age is significantly less than that of junior kindergarten programs: $2.80/hour in a municipal centre as opposed to $7.75/hour in a Toronto school. (N.B.: this cost comparison is based on 184 school attendance days as opposed to 260 child care days.)

Numerous studies have proven that high quality care enhances the verbal abilities and language development of socioeconomically disadvantaged children (Robinson, 1971; Rubenstein, 1980; Rescorla, 1982; Burchinal, 1989). The research also demonstrates that these children score significantly higher on IQ tests than do home–reared children from similar backgrounds (Trickett, 1982).

There is clear evidence that good child care plays a significant, lasting role in breaking the cycle of poverty. In a very direct way, child care helps parents get off and stay off welfare. Studies have proven that low-income mothers whose children receive reliable day care are more likely, ten years later, to be self-supporting and have higher educational attainments than parents from similar backgrounds who did not put their children in day care (Rescorla, 1982; Seitz, 1985).

High quality care appears to offset some of the decline in test scores that children from low-income families usually show as they get older. Long-term studies of disadvantaged children who receive high quality child care show that later in life these children attend school more regularly, are less likely to drop out, less likely to require remedial education and less likely to end up on welfare than their home-reared counterparts (Seitz, 1985).

Metro Toronto has the largest population of disadvantaged children in the entire province: according to the 1986 Census of Canada, 75,180 of Metro's families are low income earners. The Ontario Child Health Study found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to be less healthy, emotionally and physically, than more advantaged children; they are more likely to suffer serious physical and psychiatric handicaps. For taxpayers, then, child care is a pay now or pay later proposition.

PROTECTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The multitude of pressures on all families residing in our fast changing community makes the protection of children's rights a responsibility for us all. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Canada is a signatory, highlights the significant role child care programs play in ensuring that children have a safe and healthy environment in which to grow and develop.

Some children, those with physical or developmental handicaps, face special challenges. High quality child care delivered through integrated programs helps these children to join in the mainstream of community life. Metropolitan Toronto has over forty years experience serving special needs children and is nationally recognized as a leader in integrated programming. For this reason, Metro was recently awarded a three-year research grant by the federal government to undertake a longitudinal evaluation of its integrated programs.

Other children, though not born with special needs, benefit from the early identification of other problems by early childhood educators who are professionally trained to recognize and report signs of sexual, physical and emotional abuse of children. With early detection and intervention to solve these problems, which know no socioeconomic boundaries, children's basic rights to safety and security can be assured.

Licensed child care programs have another role in prevention, serving as "places of safety" in our community. Metropolitan Toronto is engaged in an ongoing battle against drugs and crime, and is not a safe place for unattended children. Child care centres not only ensure the physical safety of children, but undertake to street-proof this vulnerable group so that they are better able to protect themselves in their own neighbourhoods.

AN INVESTMENT IN FUTURE PRODUCTIVITY

In a very real sense, children are an economic and social resource that we all have a stake in developing. In the past, parents had large families partly as a sort of insurance policy that they would be looked after in their old age. Today we all share in the costs of raising children and all of society depends on a future workforce that is able to keep the economy going and pay our pensions.

Today's children are tomorrow's workers, and it is generally accepted that children raised in poverty are likely to make poor workers. As Canada's population ages, the negative connection between child poverty and adult productivity becomes more significant: the proportion of dependent elderly people is rapidly rising at the same time that the labour force is shrinking. The quality of the future workforce will in large part determine the economic security of the elderly and the financial health of the community as a whole.

High quality child care has been proven to be an effective, efficacious and relatively inexpensive method of intervention. It is in everyone's economic interests that the deleterious effects of poverty on children are mitigated.

Today's children are also tomorrow's voters. A classless child care system that is accessible, affordable and of high quality will secure their future. If they experience a system that values the vulnerable, they are more likely themselves to develop a collective social conscience for our community.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF METRO TORONTO

Child care policies and practices are a barometer of this municipality's social climate and mores. The Metropolitan Toronto government will be judged by how its people are treated, as well as by the cleanliness of its streets, beauty of its parks and efficiency of its transport. If Metro is to be a municipality that cares about children, a progressive, evolving, ambitious child care vision is needed.

Leadership does not come cheaply, but the costs of abdicating responsibility are frightening. In pure dollar and cents terms, child care is an excellent investment for any child with a high rate of return for all.

In terms of civic responsibility, the cost-benefit analysis is even more telling. Child care is one of the few issues that gets to the root of how we see ourselves as a community and what role government plays in expressing that vision.